

5.7 VISUAL AESTHETICS AND GRADING

The purpose of this section is to describe the existing aesthetic environment on-site and in the site vicinity, and to analyze potential project impacts to the existing aesthetic character of the site and the surrounding community. Consideration of public scenic vistas and views, impacts to scenic resources and the introduction of new sources of light and glare are also included in this section.

5.7.1 Existing Conditions

5.7.1.1 Visual Setting/Character

On-site

The project development area is located on a westerly sloping series of well-defined coastal terraces above the Pacific Ocean. Topography in the Ponto Area is generally gently sloping, although there are some areas with greater elevational change. On-site elevations generally range from approximately 30 feet amsl in the southern portion of the property to approximately 70 feet amsl in the central portion. The area south of Avenida Encinas is a bluff area with excellent views out to the Batiquitos Lagoon and the Pacific Ocean. A high point in elevation occurs on-site at the intersection of Ponto Drive and Avenida Encinas. Ponto Drive slopes down into the area of lowest on-site elevation, where the former off-ramps and underpass for Old Highway 101 were located.

The southern two-thirds of the site are undeveloped and dominated by grasses and herbaceous annuals. Ornamental landscaping is generally present in the developed areas within private yards.

A 572-foot long drainage, approximately three feet wide, originates just east of Carlsbad Boulevard at Ponto Drive. The drainage runs to the south through an empty lot to a concrete ditch, which connects to a drain that then ultimately drains to the Pacific Ocean. Overhead utilities are also present in areas of the site.

An estimated twenty-four structures exist on-site and range from one to two stories in height, in varying degrees of condition. Structures appear to be of metal, wood, and stucco construction. On-site uses include single-family residential, multiple light industrial, and commercial uses. Historical uses within the subject site included, but were not limited to, metal shops, paint shops, antique repair, and mirror reconditioning facilities, dipping and stripping operations of materials, auto repair, metal fabrications, agricultural activities, and the San Diego Northern Railroad.

Off-site

The project site is located within the urban context of the City of Carlsbad. Land uses in the vicinity of the Ponto Area are predominately residential. To the north of the project area is the Hanover Beach Colony residential neighborhood, and to the northeast is Lakeshore Gardens, a mobile home park. To the east is the SDNR and single-family residential

development, with shopping and services for the residential neighborhoods located along Avenida Encinas, east of the residential areas. The Batiquitos Lagoon is to the south of the project development area. Directly west of the project area on the oceanfront bluffs and adjacent to Carlsbad Boulevard are the campsites of South Carlsbad State Beach, with the beach and Pacific Ocean below.

5.7.1.2 Applicable Plans, Policies, and Regulations

City of Carlsbad Scenic Corridor Guidelines

To complement the City's Landscape Guidelines Manual and the General Plan Circulation Element, the City adopted its Scenic Corridor Guidelines in July 1988 to provide additional guidance in preserving and enhancing the character of roadways within the City with unique views or visual characteristics. The guidelines generally apply to development that occurs within or adjacent to the right-of-way of identified scenic corridors. Carlsbad Boulevard is identified as a "Community Theme Corridor" within the Scenic Corridor Guidelines. As this roadway parallels the Pacific Ocean in the vicinity of the Ponto Area, it affords views of the Pacific Ocean, stretches of beach, Batiquitos Lagoon, and recreational activities such as camping and surfing.

According to the Circulation Element, Community Theme Corridors are considered to "connect Carlsbad with adjacent communities and present the City of Carlsbad to persons entering and passing through the community." The designation is intended to preserve and enhance the visual, environmental, and historical characteristics of the City and along the route through planning and design measures. Goals included in the Guidelines that apply specifically to Carlsbad Boulevard include establishing a natural beach-oriented theme; enhancing visual quality through theme-oriented landscaping and street furniture; preserving natural quality of the lagoon areas by limiting landscaping adjacent to the lagoon; and, encouraging landscape setbacks to achieve a sense of openness along developed segments the roadway. Other Scenic Theme Corridors include El Camino Real, Palomar Airport Road, La Costa Avenue and Melrose Drive.

In addition to scenic corridors, certain locations have been identified as major entry points into the City. Carlsbad Boulevard is identified as a major entryway where Carlsbad Boulevard enters the City just to the southwest of the proposed Ponto Area; refer to Figure 5.1-1. The location is identified as a "Major Entry Monumentation" which signifies the major southern entry point into the City and is considered a "visual transition zone" that will identify and enhance the City's unique character. Monumentation, combined with landscaping and/or signage, is suggested in the Guidelines for this highly visible, high-use location.

In addition, the SDNR is identified as a scenic railroad corridor with the Scenic Corridor Guidelines. This railway is identified as a "special condition" corridor which provides views to rail passengers traveling through the City. The Guidelines suggest improvements along the railroad right-of-way to upgrade the image of Carlsbad and to inform passengers that they have arrived in the City.

City of Carlsbad Final Master EIR, General Plan Update

The City of Carlsbad Final Master EIR for the General Plan Update discusses the potential for visual impacts to occur within the City as landform modification takes place with future development. To minimize such impacts, all future development would be subject to compliance with the following policies, guidelines, and ordinances, as applicable:

- Planned Development Ordinance and Design Guidelines Manual;
- Landscape Guidelines Manual;
- Zoning Regulations;
- Growth Management Ordinance;
- City Council Policy 44 – Architectural Guidelines for the Development of Liveable Neighborhoods;
- Hillside Development Ordinance;
- Planned Development Ordinance;
- Hillside Development Ordinance; and,
- Carlsbad Municipal Code Title 21.53 and CEQA.

In addition, mitigation measures are given in the EIR to reduce the potential for visual impacts to occur as the result of site development. These mitigation measures address architectural review, grading of hillsides, and land use development standards to preserve natural features and characteristics, among other measures.

City of Carlsbad Landscape Manual

The City's Landscape Manual provides guidelines for landscaping, irrigation requirements, wildfire prevention, streetscape, slope revegetation, water conservation, and erosion control. In an effort to reduce water demands resulting from irrigation and to maintain the visual environment, all proposed development within the City is subject to the requirements of the Landscape Manual.

5.7.1.3 Existing Public Viewpoints***Carlsbad Boulevard***

Carlsbad Boulevard generally runs north/south and parallels the Ponto Area to the west. The roadway is identified as a Major Roadway within the City and, as mentioned above, is designated as a Community Theme Corridor within the City Scenic Corridor Guidelines. Topography along the roadway is generally flat as it crosses the Batiquitos Lagoon to the south, then ascends gradually as it passes along the frontage of the project area. The roadway is a two-lane roadway in the north and south directions along the site, with a left-turn lane provided into the site at Avenida Encinas. In addition, a right turn-lane is provided off of Carlsbad Boulevard at Ponto Drive to allow access to the northern portion of the project site, as well as to the other residential areas to the north of the project area.

Views to the site from Carlsbad Boulevard occur from both the northbound and southbound lanes. The longest views are from the northbound lanes approaching the site, across Batiquitos Lagoon.

Avenida Encinas

As Avenida Encinas crosses the Ponto Area, views looking to the north and south across the site are afforded from this public roadway. In addition, east of the railroad tracks, views looking west from the roadway also occur from the existing residential neighborhood.

Ponto Drive

The Hanover Beach Colony residential neighborhood is located to the north of the proposed project development area, with access taken along Ponto Drive. From Ponto Drive, views into the site would generally be afforded looking south and southwest.

South Carlsbad State Beach and Campground

South Carlsbad State Beach and Campground is located to the west of the Ponto Area, across Carlsbad Boulevard. The beach and campground serve as public recreational areas, with parking for day tourists and overnight camping for recreational vehicles. Views to the Ponto Area from these locations are generally limited, due to topography and existing landscaping, as well as distance from the site across Carlsbad Boulevard.

Batiquitos Lagoon

Limited views of the Ponto Area occur from locations adjacent to or within the Batiquitos Lagoon, due to elevational differences and natural landforms (i.e. coastal bluffs). Views from the Lagoon looking north to the site would be limited due to the approximate 40-foot elevational difference between the southern portion of the development area and the elevation of the Lagoon. Views of the Ponto Area would be afforded at a distance from the site looking north from within the Lagoon, crossing the Lagoon on Carlsbad Boulevard, and from the south edge of the Lagoon near the City of Encinitas.

Northern San Diego Railroad

As mentioned, the NSDR railway runs north-south to the east of the Ponto Area. The railway is identified as a scenic railroad corridor within the Scenic Corridor Guidelines. This railway affords passengers on the train views to the west of the Pacific Ocean, across the Ponto Area, and generally of Batiquitos Lagoon to the east and west as the railway crosses the water between the Cities of Encinitas and Carlsbad.

5.7.2 Thresholds for Determining Significance

The significance thresholds used for this section are from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. For the purpose of this EIR, a significant impact related to aesthetics or visual resources would occur if the proposed project would:

- Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area;

- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings;
- Have a substantially adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- Propose development on natural slopes greater than 40% and create manufactured slopes greater than 40 feet in height which are not excluded from Section 21.95.130 of the Hillside Development Regulations or subject to standards modification Section 21.95.140; or,
- Create a manufactured slope greater than 20 feet in height and 200 feet in length that is not contoured and which is located adjacent to or is substantially visible from a circulation element road, collector street, or useable public open space area [(21.95.120(F)(1)] of the Municipal Code) and also is not excluded from Section 21.95.130 of the Hillside Development Regulations or subject to standard modification Section 21.95.140.

The significance criteria listed above are used to evaluate potential visual impacts on the project site and from areas that are designated as scenic corridors or scenic vistas. These areas typically consist of public thoroughfares or vantage points. The City of Carlsbad does not have an adopted ordinance that protects private views.

5.7.3 Environmental Impact

5.7.3.1 Light and Glare

As noted, the Ponto Area is located within an urban setting. To the north and east are residential neighborhoods, with the Batiquitos Lagoon to the south and the Pacific Ocean to the west. Limited light or glare is currently generated on the property from the existing residential, commercial, and light industrial uses. Existing outdoor lighting is generally limited to that necessary for safety and access, as well as security of outdoor areas, and is not considered to be a source of significant light or glare. Outdoor lighting in adjacent neighborhoods is similar to that found on the Ponto Area, with outdoor fixtures generally providing lighting for purposes of access and safety of the residents.

As development would occur over time on the project site, potential new sources of light or glare may be introduced to the area. Potential sources of light would be from lighting for outdoor safety and circulation, operation of the resort and commercial facilities, delivery and personal vehicles, and outdoor lighting for residential uses, among other sources. However, all lighting within the Ponto Area would be subject to City standards for structural, street, and recreational lighting to ensure that lighting impacts do not occur. All future lighting would be shielded and directed downward to prevent spillover into adjacent properties. Additionally, Mitigation Measure B-5, as described in Section 5.2, would require that night lighting be directed away from the lagoon area to minimize potential nighttime lighting impacts to wildlife. Proposed lighting conditions would be addressed through preparation of a lighting plan, to be submitted with a site development plan or other application, subject to review and approval by the Planning Director.

Mandatory compliance for all new building permits would ensure that the proposed project in combination with all past, present and future projects would not contribute to a long-term or

cumulatively considerable lighting impact. Therefore, development on the site would not create a significant new source of substantial light or glare (at either the project or cumulative level) that would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area. Visual impacts resulting from light and glare would, therefore, be less than significant.

In summary, implementation of the Ponto Vision Plan is not anticipated to disrupt the existing pattern of the visual environment, or be incompatible with the existing visual character in terms of dominance, scale, diversity or continuity. Therefore, impacts to visual aesthetics and grading would be less than significant.

5.7.3.2 Long-Term Aesthetic Impacts

Implementation of the Ponto Vision Plan would result in future development of the site with residential, commercial, tourism-oriented, and recreational uses. As a portion of the site is presently developed, and the areas adjacent to the site to the north and east support residential neighborhoods, development proposed with the Vision Plan would be consistent with existing development typical of an urban setting, particularly along a Major Roadway, such as Carlsbad Boulevard. Although the project site currently contains some existing development, buildout under the proposed Vision Plan would represent some change from what is currently on the site; however, future development of the Ponto Area would maintain existing (or lower) pad elevations to the greatest extent practicable. The following analysis evaluates whether that change represents a substantial degradation of the visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. In addition, all future development within the Ponto Area would be required to be consistent with the Local Coastal Program to maintain existing public views to the maximum extent practicable.

Figures 5.7-2 illustrates the topography of the site and shows existing on-site views. In addition, Figure 5.7-3 identifies the locations from where visual simulations were prepared for the existing and anticipated future conditions on the site. The visual simulations are included in Figures 5.7-4 through 5.7-8.

As discussed in Section 3.4, several preliminary review applications within the Ponto development area were submitted to the City for comment. These projects are considered in the visual analysis. Preliminary site plans for these projects were obtained prior to preparation of the following visual simulations, for awareness of architectural design and character, site layout and views, landscaping, and other development characteristics that may affect the visual environment of the Ponto Area. As these designs are still in the preliminary stages, the visual simulations were not intended to portray an exact image of how these potential developments would appear, but rather to give an illustrative view in order to evaluate how potential development would reflect the overall theme and design guidelines established in the Ponto Vision Plan.

Photosimulation One (Photos A-1 and A-2)

This simulation depicts the existing and proposed views looking south into the site from Ponto Drive; refer to Figure 5.7-4. As mentioned, the Hanover Beach Colony residential neighborhood is located to the north of the Ponto Area. Access to and from the neighborhood is taken from Ponto Drive, which runs along the southern boundary of the neighborhood. Views into the site would also occur to travelers along Ponto Drive, and from residential

units in Hanover Beach Colony adjacent to this roadway. In addition, units within Lakeshore Gardens Mobilehome Park to the northeast and Poinsettia Shores to the east would also have views of this area.

From this vantage point, views into the Ponto Area would be of the proposed Hotel/Commercial uses in the northern portion of the property (see also Section 3.2). This area is planned for a Garden Hotel, which is envisioned as a three-story hotel offering a small conference facility with views to the ocean, landscaping and pedestrian plazas. The Vision Plan recommends orientation of the façade to Ponto Drive to “create an architectural edge and attractive view” from neighboring residential streets, with the second and third stories stepped back to reduce the visual scale. A parking garage for employee and visitor parking is also envisioned.

A full application has been submitted for this portion of the site, for development of the Hilton Carlsbad Beach Resort. The proposed development area would total approximately seven acres. As described in Section 3.4, the project as proposed would include 215 hotel rooms; 12,820 square feet (SF) of meeting space; a 5,030 SF restaurant; a 1,990 SF café/bar; and spa. In addition, a three-story parking garage is also proposed. Publicly accessible amenities would include oceanfront meeting rooms for functions and weddings, a public spa, and a pedestrian trail along Carlsbad Boulevard. The project would total approximately 24,000 square feet.

Structurally, the hotel facilities would consist of one main hotel building and a parking structure. As proposed, the main hotel would be one-story at the northern end, adjacent to the single-family homes and then would increase to three stories further to the south. The parking garage would be proposed in the eastern portion of the development area. Landscaping would be proposed along Ponto Drive to screen views into the site. Overhead utilities would be undergrounded, as recommended by the Ponto Vision Plan. Therefore, potential impacts are considered to be less than significant.

Photosimulation Two (Photos B-1 and B-2)

This simulation depicts the existing and proposed views of the site looking southwest from the SDNR at (future) Beach Way; refer to Figure 5.7-5. This area of the site is proposed as a Townhouse Neighborhood, which would consist of a high-density neighborhood (19 dwelling units/acre) with a neighborhood park, visitor parking, and landscaping to buffer views into the site and of the adjacent railroad right-of-way.

Existing views into the site from this vantage point occur across the existing railway tracks of the SDNR. Currently, views across the site from this location are of the undeveloped portion of the site. As seen in the photo simulation, views to the State Beach and the Pacific Ocean are reduced due to elevational differences between this location and these points. Vehicles traveling along Carlsbad Boulevard are visible at intermittent locations, due to existing landscaping and varying site topography. A preliminary review application was submitted for this portion of the site for a mixed-use residential development. The proposed development area would cover approximately 9.5 acres of land. Access to the project area would be provided via Ponto Drive. The proposed project would include 128 attached condominium units, 32,500 square feet of restaurant/retail space, 24 residential stacked flats, nine live/work units, and a four-level parking structure (with one story underground). All structures

proposed would observe the maximum height limit of 35 feet above grade. Overhead utilities would be undergrounded, as recommended by the Ponto Vision Plan.

In addition, grading and construction of a retaining wall may be required in association with the construction of Beach Way and Ponto Road to elevate the roadbed eight to ten feet above the existing site elevation in order to connect to Carlsbad Boulevard and to allow for gravity flow for sewerage purposes. Long-term impacts to views across the site as the result of these improvements are not anticipated, as properties in the areas surrounding this portion of the site are generally higher in elevation than the area where the improvements would occur; refer to Figures 5.7-2 and 5.7-5. In addition, consistent with the Local Coastal Program, all future development within the Ponto Area would be required to preserve existing public views, which are generally to the west towards the ocean, to the greatest extent practicable. Therefore, no significant impacts to visual resources from these improvements are anticipated.

Photo Simulation Three (Photos CA-1 and C-2)

This simulation depicts the existing and proposed views of the site looking southwest across the southern portion of the site (from approximately the SDNR railway tracks and Rudder Avenue); refer to Figure 5.7-6. This portion of the Ponto Area is proposed for a Resort Hotel use that would consist of an upscale beachfront resort that would create an attractive landmark for the southern gateway to Carlsbad. The resort is envisioned to include a combination of hotel lodging and timeshare units, restaurant, meeting facilities, pool and publicly accessible retail shops. Connection to the regional trail system, as well as community trails, is recommended. Some guest and employee parking would be provided aboveground, while the majority would be located underground. Buildings would be oriented to take advantage of views.

Existing views into the site from this vantage point occur across the existing railway tracks of the SDNR. Currently, views across the site from this location are of the undeveloped portion of the site. As seen in the photo simulation, views to the State Beach and the Pacific Ocean are reduced due to elevational differences between this location and these resources. Vehicles traveling along Carlsbad Boulevard are visible at intermittent locations, due to existing landscaping and site topography.

A preliminary review application was submitted for this portion of the site, for comment regarding a resort hotel and timeshare development on approximately 14 acres. Access to the site would be from Avenida Encinas. The project as proposed would include approximately 180 hotel units, 126 timeshare units, 3,700 square feet of retail/restaurant space, 5,000 square feet of banquet space, and a two-level parking structure. All of the hotel and timeshare units as proposed would be within a series of 5 three-story structures all reaching a maximum height of 35 feet as measured from grade. Therefore, potential impacts from this vantage point are considered less than significant.

Photosimulation Four (Photos D-1 and D-2)

This simulation depicts the existing and proposed view from northbound Carlsbad Boulevard looking northeast to the Ponto Area; refer to Figure 5.7-7. This area of the site is proposed for development of the Beachfront Resort, as described above.

Existing views into the Ponto Area from this location would be afforded along Carlsbad Boulevard, with the large bluff above Batiquitos Lagoon in view. With development of the area, the hotel facilities on top of the bluff would be visible to travelers moving north on Carlsbad Boulevard along the majority of the roadway across Batiquitos Lagoon, with visibility becoming greater as distance to the site decreases. Landscaping techniques would be utilized to screen views into the site and to blend the development into the surrounding environment. All of the hotel and timeshare units as proposed would be a maximum height of 35 feet as measured from grade. Therefore, potential impacts are considered less than significant

Photosimulation Five (Photos E-1 and E-2)

This simulation depicts the existing and proposed views looking northeast from the intersection of Avenida Encinas and Carlsbad Boulevard; refer to Figure 5.7-8. This area is proposed as a Mixed-Use/Live Work Neighborhood and is envisioned as providing living space, as well as office and workspace, while allowing for the adaptive reuse of existing buildings or the continuation of compatible uses. This area is proposed to include a Mixed-Use Center with small specialty shops, restaurants, services, offices, housing. Public amenities such as a Wetland Interpretive Park, Community Art and Nature Center, and Village Plaza for public gatherings are also envisioned. One- to three-story buildings are desired, with pedestrian plazas, neighborhood commercial development, and surface parking, as well as a four-level parking structure (one level underground with screened rooftop parking).

Existing views into the site from this location are of the undeveloped portion of the site, with a mixture of grassland and disturbed areas. Residential development to the north and east of the Ponto Area are not visible from this viewpoint location.

A preliminary application was submitted for this portion of the site, for a mixed-use residential development. Overall, the proposed development area would cover approximately 9.5 acres of land, combined with the development area described in Photosimulation Two above, all of which is under the same ownership. Access to the area would be provided via Ponto Drive. The project as proposed would include 128 attached condominium units, 32,500 square feet of restaurant/retail space, 24 residential stacked flats, nine live/work units, and a four-level parking structure. All structures are proposed within the height limit of 35 feet.

Ponto Beachfront Village Vision Plan

The Ponto Beachfront Village Vision Plan establishes a set of guidelines for development of the project site. These guidelines are intended to achieve an overall visual cohesiveness for the site, ensuring that development would not adversely impact the scenic or natural resources afforded by the project's coastal location.

Future on-site development would be required to demonstrate consistency with the Ponto Vision Plan to ensure a quality aesthetic environment for on-site residents and visitors, as well as for views from off-site locations. The design guidelines would be applied as part of the City's review of proposed projects through the design review process or through the review of a discretionary land use permits. The design elements of each project (including site design, architecture, landscaping, signs, and parking design) would be reviewed on a comprehensive basis by the applicable review authority. During the design review process,

the review authority may interpret the design guidelines with some flexibility in their application to specific projects, as not all design criteria may be workable or appropriate for each project; however, the overall objective would be to ensure that the intent and spirit of the design guidelines are followed.

The design guidelines are intended to achieve the following key principles:

- Strong sense of place;
- Balance of tourist-serving and neighborhood uses;
- Pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly;
- Unique architectural character;
- Abundant landscaping;
- Gateways;
- Community trail system;
- Enhanced visual and physical beach access; and,
- Convenient parking opportunities.

To reduce the potential visual impacts resulting from development of the Ponto Area, design standards are provided to guide architectural design in terms of architectural character, building heights and rooflines, number of stories, style and scale, and screening of rooftop equipment. In addition, the Ponto Vision Plan calls for the undergrounding of utilities with on-site development.

Recommendations for building orientation and site design are made and include the following techniques to minimize visual impacts of future development on the Ponto Area and to maintain existing views:

- Primary building entrances should be oriented toward public sidewalks to encourage a high level of pedestrian activity.
- When residential and commercial uses are provided in the same structure, separate pedestrian entrances should be provided for each use.
- Vary setbacks to provide informality and diversity. Setbacks should be used for landscaping, plazas, and outdoor dining.
- Buildings should be encircled by a continuous sidewalk or pedestrian space to promote pedestrian access and circulation.
- Encourage off-street courtyards, plazas, and paseos accessible from pedestrian walkways.
- Surface parking should be concentrated in areas away from the street and should be well-landscaped with attractive drive aisles that function as internal streets. Parking areas should be interconnected wherever possible.
- Natural amenities unique to the site such as ocean views, etc., should be preserved and incorporated into development projects.

- Use landscaping to screen parking areas and trash enclosures, create visual interest, and enhance the desired character of the area.
- Refuse storage, service, and loading areas should be located out of view or screened from view so that their use does not interfere with parking and circulation. Refuse storage areas that are visible from upper stories of adjacent structures should include an opaque or semi-opaque cover to mitigate views. All screening devices (landscaping, low walls, structures) should be compatible with surrounding architecture, materials, and colors.

Although Carlsbad Boulevard is considered a scenic corridor, the Ponto Area itself is not. Future development on individually-owned properties would be required to be consistent with the General Plan, Zoning Ordinance, Local Coastal Program, Ponto Beachfront Village Vision Plan, Scenic Corridor Guidelines, and other plans, policies, and ordinances to regulate building height, scale, preservation of significant public views, setbacks, grading, and landscaping to ensure that the scenic value of the site is maintained and visual resources are not diminished as individual properties are developed over time. Therefore, implementation of the Vision Plan is not anticipated to result in significant impacts to a scenic resource or to an existing scenic vista from the view of surrounding land uses.

In addition, the aesthetic quality of the site and its coastal location would be maintained and/or enhanced through the design guidelines given in the Vision Plan. Site and building design, as well as landscaping measures would ensure that the visual integrity of the site is not diminished, but rather enhanced, as development of the property occurs in the future. Therefore, implementation of the Vision Plan would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site or its surroundings.

Application of the Ponto Vision Plan Design Guidelines and conformance with other applicable regulations for development of the site would not result in substantial changes to significant natural features. Development would not impact the existing coastal bluffs or views to the Lagoon and Pacific Ocean, and improvements would be made to enhance and maintain the view corridor and entryway. As the site is gently sloping, massive grading that would result in potential visual impacts due to land modification is not anticipated. As such, development of the Ponto Area would avoid substantial changes to significant natural resources and impacts would be less than significant.

City of Carlsbad Scenic Corridor Guidelines

Consistent with the Scenic Corridor Guidelines, the Vision Plan provides guidance for the enhancement of a major entryway into the City along Carlsbad Boulevard, near the northern edge of the Batiquitos Lagoon; refer to Figure 5.7-1. Guidelines are provided for design of a City entry monument, incorporating a low rock wall with natural, informal landscaping. In addition, the Vision Plan recommends street furniture, signage, and public art that would be used to achieve the goal of the Scenic Corridor Guidelines of enhancing the unique character of Carlsbad Boulevard, by reinforcing a beach-oriented theme and improving the visual quality of the roadway.

The Vision Plan proposes the use of a variety of landscaping materials along the proposed Carlsbad Boulevard median and parkway to define the edge and improve aesthetics, while reinforcing an overall beach-oriented theme. All future development would be consistent

with the Scenic Corridor Guidelines for landscaping and setbacks along the corridor to reinforce a sense of openness along the Boulevard. The selection of suggested trees and plants is made with particular attention to maintaining views from the roadway to the ocean and within the corridor, consistent with the Scenic Corridor Guidelines. Design guidelines given in the Vision Plan also encourage the use of landscaping to soften the appearance of buildings, screening for undesirable views and parking areas, and to buffer noise, light and fumes from vehicle operations, among other applications.

5.7.3.3 City of Carlsbad General Plan Land Use Element

The following General Plan land use designations currently apply to the proposed Ponto Area: UA – Unplanned Area; TR/C – Travel/Recreation Commercial; RMH – Residential Medium High (8–15 dwelling units/acre); RMH/TR – a dual designation indicating that with further planning, one or both uses may be appropriate; and, OS – Open Space and Community Parks; refer to Figure 5.11-2. The Vision Plan would require an amendment to the General Plan and Local Coastal Program to allow for project implementation under an “Area of Special Consideration” designation; however, development proposed under the Vision Plan is considered consistent with the type of development allowed under the existing General Plan designations, as well as the Local Coastal Program. Therefore, the Vision Plan would not conflict with an existing land use plan or result in development that is inconsistent with the anticipated use of the site.

5.7.3.4 City of Carlsbad Zoning Ordinance

At present, there are three City zoning designations for the various parcels in the Ponto Area. These designations include: PC – Planned Community; CT-Q – Commercial Tourist zone with Qualified Development Overlay; RD-M-Q – Residential Density – Multiple zone with Qualified Development Overlay; and, CT-Q/RD-M-Q – A dual designation indicating that with further planning, one or both uses may be appropriate; refer to Figure 5.11-3. No changes to the existing zoning are proposed with implementation of the Vision Plan. Individual ownerships within the 50-acre development area would be allowed to develop consistent with the existing underlying zoning with or without approval of the Ponto Vision Plan. Therefore, the Vision Plan would not result in uses on the site that would conflict with the existing zoning or result in uses that are not consistent with those intended for the site.

5.7.3.5 Grading/Landform Modification

As development of individual properties would occur over time within the Ponto Area, temporary grading for building pads and on-site roadways, as well as the installation of utilities, to allow for development of the site would occur, most likely intermittently. Portions of graded surfaces, construction equipment, and truck traffic may at times be visible from certain off-site public vantage points, depending on the location of the grading and existing development on the property at the time that improvements occur. As the Vision Plan does not propose specific development, grading quantities would be determined at the time when individual grading permits are submitted to and reviewed by the City. However, as development of the project site would occur on individual ownerships and is anticipated to occur over a number of years in the future, rather than concentrated at one time, potential

visual impacts caused by grading and construction equipment would be less as compared to a scenario where the entire 50-acre development area was developed at once.

Future on-site grading would be required to conform to the Carlsbad Municipal Code and the City of Carlsbad Design Guidelines Manual and would be subject to review by the City Engineer. Cut and fill slopes would be subject to the requirements of the Landscape Design Manual for slope stabilization and erosion control, as well as revegetation requirements for disturbed slopes. The use of retaining walls, if needed, and their potential visual effect would also be evaluated at the time of discretionary review, and mitigation (i.e., screening) would be proposed as applicable to reduce potential visual impacts to less than significant. The existing topography on the project site is a gentle slope with no significant elevational changes. As such, there are no natural slopes with gradients of 40% or greater and no manufactured slopes greater than 20 feet proposed. As such, future grading activities on the project site would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings, and impacts would be less than significant.

As noted in Section 3.2.3.3, potentially extensive grading and construction of a retaining wall may be required in association with the construction of Beach Way and Ponto Road to elevate the roadbed eight to ten feet above the existing site elevation in order to connect to Carlsbad Boulevard and to allow for gravity flow for sewerage purposes. Visual impacts may result from construction activities for these improvements but would be temporary, and, therefore, are not considered to be significant. Additionally, long-term visual impacts are not anticipated, as public views across the site would not be impaired by the landform modification required to achieve the elevational change for these improvements. Properties surrounding the Ponto Area are generally higher in elevation than the area where the roadway would be constructed; therefore, it is not anticipated that long-term visual impacts, such as the obstruction of public views, would occur as a result of these proposed improvements; refer to Figures 5.7-2 and 5.7-5.

Consistent with this approach, development of the proposed Hilton Carlsbad Beach Resort in the northern portion of the Ponto Area would require a cut slope and importation of approximately 8,000 c.y. of soil to achieve a final building pad height of approximately 60 feet amsl. Relative to the Hanover Beach Colony development, located just to the north of where the Hilton project is proposed, existing elevations generally range from approximately 60–64 feet amsl. Therefore, the building pad elevation of the Hilton project would generally be lower than that of the adjacent Hanover development.

In addition, all construction lighting would be of the minimum necessary for safety purposes, and all lighting would be shielded and directed downward so as not to spillover into adjacent neighborhoods or open space areas. Construction impacts would be short-term and would cease upon project completion. As such, short-term visual impacts due to site improvement activities would not result in a new source of substantial light or glare. Potential impacts would be less than significant and mitigation would not be required.

5.7.4 Mitigation Measures

Short-Term Aesthetic Impacts

No significant short-term aesthetic impacts as the result of site grading or construction activities or light and glare have been identified. As such, no mitigation would be required.

Long Term Aesthetic Impacts

No significant long-term aesthetic impacts as a result of site development have been identified. As such, no mitigation would be required.

5.7.4.1 City Standard Conditions of Approval

Development within the proposed Ponto Area would be subject to the following standard Conditions of Approval:

- Development within the Ponto Area shall comply with the City's Scenic Corridor Development Standards and shall require approval of a Scenic Corridor Special Use Permit, as applicable.
- Prior to the issuance of a grading permit or improvement plans in lieu of a grading permit, the applicant shall submit to the satisfaction of the City Director of Planning a Landscape Plan showing vegetative cover on manufactured slopes to reduce the visibility of the slopes from off-site locations. The planting shall be consistent with the approved Landscape Plan for the project and the City's Landscape Design Manual. Additionally, the Landscape Plan shall include design of proposed retaining walls and vegetative screening.
- As a Condition of Approval and prior to occupancy, the developer shall install landscape screening with plant materials of varying form, height, and densities to soften and vary graded slope planes (consistent with a prepared Landscape Plan) to minimize the visual impact of graded slopes from view of any public road. The Landscape Plan shall be approved by the City Director of Planning and Land Use, prior to issuance of any permit.
- The applicant shall prepare a Lighting Plan consistent with, but not limited to, City requirements for light shielding, limitations on decorative lighting, night sky compliance, and reduced height standards in parking areas, as applicable. The Lighting Plan shall be subject to review and approval by the Planning Director.
- The applicant shall prepare a Grading Plan, subject to review and approval by the City Engineer, consistent with City engineering standards and requirements. To the greatest extent possible, the Grading Plan shall achieve a final building pad elevation that is similar to or lower than the existing elevation.

5.7.5 Impact After Mitigation

No significant impacts related to aesthetics have been identified.

**Figure 5.7-1
Gateway Locations**

(11 x 17) color PLACEHOLDER

**Figure 5.7-2
On-site Views**

(11x17) color PLACEHOLDER

**Figure 5.7-3
Viewpoint Location Map**

(11 x 17 color) PLACEHOLDER

**Figure 5.7-4
Visual Simulation**

(11 x 17 color) PLACEHOLDER

**Figure 5.7-5
Visual Simulation**

(11 x 17 color) PLACEHOLDER

**Figure 5.7-6
Visual Simulation**

(11 x 17 color) PLACEHOLDER

**Figure 5.7-7
Visual Simulation**

(11 x 17 color) PLACEHOLDER

**Figure 5.7-8
Visual Simulation**

(11 x 17 color) PLACEHOLDER